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Committee for Programme and Coordination
Forty-second session
10 June to 5 July 2002
Agenda item 9
Adoption of the report of the Committee on the work of its forty-second session

Draft report

Rapporteur: Mr. Alejandro **Torres Lépori** (Argentina)

Addendum

Programme questions: evaluation

(Item 4 (c))

Strengthening the role of evaluation findings in programme design, delivery and policy directives

1. At its 3rd and 4th meetings, on 10 and 11 June 2002, the Committee considered the note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) on strengthening the role of evaluation finding in programme design, delivery and policy directives (A/57/68).

2. The Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services introduced the report.

Discussion

3. The Committee welcomed the report, noting that it was candid, straightforward, comprehensive and useful. It provided an honest assessment of the evaluation function, as currently practised within the United Nations. Concern was expressed at significant non-compliance by programme managers with the rules and regulations governing programme planning, budgeting and monitoring, in particular with regard to the evaluation function. It was noted that a culture of evaluation did not seem to have developed yet within the United Nations, and that evaluation had not been mainstreamed or given adequate priority.

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4. The Committee regretted that the majority of programmes did not appear to have developed comprehensive evaluation plans as required by the Rules and Regulations Governing Programme Planning. It was regretted that only 15 programmes had adopted specific measures to enable the relevant intergovernmental bodies and specialized organs to review evaluation findings. The view was expressed that there should be a closer link between performance of management and resource allocation. However, it was recalled that during the Fifth Committee negotiations on results-based budgeting, the decision had been taken to de-link allocation of resources from performance, and to focus instead on the review of factors that made programmes work well or not so well.

5. The Committee supported giving increased attention to self-evaluation. It was noted that some departments fully satisfied the requirements for self-evaluation, and it was hoped that others would follow that example with the help of OIOS. It was suggested that the Committee issue a recommendation to the Economic and Social Council requiring programme managers to undertake regular self-evaluations. It was also requested that the cost of self-evaluation to a department be identified in the programme budget. Observations were made on annex I of the report concerning the capacity within departments to undertake evaluation and the fact that some large programmes did not appear to have evaluation units. It was noted that OIOS itself had four Professional evaluators. The view was expressed that the Committee should encourage strengthening of the sections within OIOS that undertook evaluation.

6. The Committee was pleased that more training was being provided and the efforts undertaken by the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts on training for results-based budgeting, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 55/231. The hope was expressed that as the results-based budgeting methodology matured, improved self-evaluations would be produced efficiently with existing resources. Clarification was requested as to when the updated manual on evaluation would be published. It was emphasized that results-based budgeting, as adopted in resolution 55/231, should be complementary and not in contradiction with the evaluation of the organization's programmes, as required by the Rules and Regulations Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation (ST/SGB/2000/8).

7. It was enquired whether, in its evaluations, OIOS had given thorough consideration to programmes that had experienced a systematic increase of resource allocation during the previous biennium.

8. Support was expressed for the reduction in the number of in-depth evaluations from two to one per year, so that the evaluation report would be available for a review by inter-governmental bodies prior to review by the Committee. The innovative proposal to introduce thematic evaluations was welcomed, and it was noted that such evaluations would be of particular value for cross-cutting themes and would help to support the implementation of global programmes. Further clarification was requested on the feasibility, scope and criteria for selection of topics for those evaluations and the resources required. Further information was also requested on the experience of other agencies, such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the United Nations Development Programme, in undertaking thematic evaluation. Concern was expressed regarding the impact of adopting thematic evaluations on the future periodicity of in-depth evaluation.

9. The view was expressed that the Joint Inspection Unit should be more involved in the preparation of in-depth evaluations with a view to complying with the request of the General Assembly in paragraph 16 of its resolution 56/245.

Conclusions and recommendations

10. The Committee expressed concern that many programme managers did not carry out self-evaluations as stipulated in the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation. The Committee emphasized that heads of departments and offices were accountable to ensure fulfilment of the objectives of article 7 of the Regulations and Rules concerning evaluation.

11. The Committee noted that the implementation of the results-based budgeting should enhance programme performance in a manner that was complementary to the existing evaluation system, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 55/231.

12. The Committee agreed with the proposal contained in the report on strengthening the role of evaluation findings, that the central evaluation activities implemented by the Office of Internal Oversight Services consist of one in-depth evaluation each year, releasing some of the existing capacity to:

(a) Enhance support for self-evaluation by other departments and offices;

(b) Prepare one thematic evaluation on a cross-cutting theme from among the priority areas of work of the Organization included in the medium-term plan.

13. The Committee recommended that the Secretary-General report on the implementation of the proposal contained in paragraph 12 (a) above, in the context of the biennial report of OIOS on strengthening the role of evaluation findings in programme design, delivery and policy directives.

14. With reference to paragraph 12 (b) above, the Committee requested the Secretary-General to entrust the Office of Internal Oversight Services to propose themes for consideration by the Committee at its forty-third session, at which time the Committee would consider commissioning a pilot project on one theme. The pilot project would subsequently be considered by the relevant intergovernmental bodies. The usefulness of that pilot project would be considered by the Committee at its forty-fifth session.

15. The Committee reiterated the need for evaluation of programme activities to be consistent with the provisions of regulation 7.1 of the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation.

16. The Committee recommended that the General Assembly approve the following schedule of in-depth evaluations (to be submitted to the Committee at its forty-third, forty-fourth and forty-fifth sessions, respectively):

(a) Law of the sea and ocean affairs;

(b) Public administration, finance and development;

(c) Human settlements.